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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON

DLK-73-56
CU II 60611

TOP SECRET
EYES ONLY

November 5, 1962

Cuba

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Cuba

I was very happy to see the Presidential instructions on the Cuban negotiations. I agree that it is terribly important not to allow the Soviets to chop away at the fundamental U.S. interest: which I would describe as a refusal by us to accept in any form an extension of Soviet strategic military power in this Hemisphere. The political and economic intrusion of Soviet influence into Cuba is a matter that we can deal with over a longer period of time and by essentially non-military means; but the use of the Island as a forward Soviet strategic base is something we cannot tolerate.

If this concept could be brought home to the Soviets as harshly as possible, we might avoid being dragged into a haggle over what constitutes "offensive weapons systems." There may even be value in leaving some doubt in the Soviet mind about the point at which we would react again to their activities in Cuba, provided the doubt was on the side of over-estimation.

I would think that this point would have to be made to the Soviets at all levels of communication, although I realize that the first step is the one you have already taken, i.e. hardening our attitude in official negotiations. Once we have the first Soviet diplomatic reaction, however, you might consider getting the message repeated to them through other channels. Among these might be a press backgrounder by you and a talk by Bobby to whomever he knows in the Soviet community.

Here, as in most dealings with them, much more can be gotten from the Soviets in substance than in form. Dickering over hardware permits them to chip away at our position and probably has a bad political effect both here and in the Soviet Union. A clear statement of what we want in substance would give us, I think, more flexibility in deciding at what point we wanted to make a strong reaction. It also has the advantage of keeping the nature of our guarantee reciprocally flexible, i.e. the guarantee not to invade Cuba operates only so long as there is no Soviet strategic presence there.

MYF

Michael V. Forrestal

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revealed

UMI 2005

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited: An International Collection of Documents, from the Bay of Pigs to the Brink of Nuclear War

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